SAMMY, THE ORPHAN

By Lyle L. Cole.

THE coarse cutting of the air by a switch engine whistle awakened Sammy. He stretched himself out as fully as the piles of merchandise around him would permit, and listened drowsily to Seattle beginning her morning tasks.

At his back was a huge warehouse, on the other side of which were the railway tracks of the transcontinental lines, and beyond them Seattle, vigorous, noisy, and thoroughly Western.

Before him lay the waters of Puget Sound, stretching across to the point crowned by West Seattle, beyond to Port Blakeley, Port Townsend, and on out to the Pacific.

To the left, the coal bunkers loomed up black in the white tissue of fog, and close by, on his right, rolled the Tacoma, soon to leave for Nome.

Sammy had returned from Alaska the day before, and was thoroughly "broke." The Klondike, which had been his Mecca a few months before, had proved to be his Waterloo as well, and as he walked over the plank with a herd of unkempt men burdened, like himself, with great canvas bags containing all their possessions on this earth, he had wonderedidly where he would sleep that night.

Being utterly careless, he had chosen the Columbia Street dock, and stowed himself away among the bales, bags, barrels, and boxes which covered the planking.

Sammy was not new to Seattle. In the past he had "packed" his belongings to various mining and logging camps, but he always returned to Seattle when his luck failed him.

He liked the noise and the rush along Second avenue; he liked the sight and smell of fish and fruit on Western avenue among the commission houses; he liked to sit on the dock, feel the plank moving under him with the wash of the waves, watch the Chinamen fishing from ocean steamers, and dream of that glorious time when he would be rich and own a house on Queen Anne Hill.

That it would come to that he had no doubt. He was full of the miner's faith that things were bound to turn his way.

Therefore Sammy felt quite at home this morning, surrounded by the roar in the streets at his back, and with the noise from the Sound before him.

He was a little hungry, but that wasn't a matter worth fretting over—as long as Arizona Charley's place nestled among its squalid neighbors up there toward the tide flats. Many a time Charley had "staked" him for his meals, and he would do it again.

Neither did Sammy worry about work. There was always plenty to do.

He could get a job in a logging camp, or a salmon cannery, or out in the mines. There were a hundred things he could do, having done at least that many in his shifting career.

There was no hurry about it, anyway. He wanted to rest for a day or two among the old familiar sights and sounds and smells, and after that—well, he was strong and sound, and in Seattle.

Just to be back in Seattle's streets again was "sufficient unto the day."

He came out from his resting place behind the boxes and sat down on the edge of the dock to gloat over the Olympic mountain peaks just beginning to push through the froth of clouds. It seemed like a tonic—this beautiful, mountain distilled morning, with its fresh air and bright colors.

A Chinaman leaned out through his customary slot in the big vessel and with a deft finger sent a fish line uncoiling out among the piling. He succeeded in pulling two or three small, flat fish from the milky looking water.

A newspaper came rolling toward Sammy and lodged against him. Sammy clutched it eagerly.

"Here's luck," he said. "Yesterday's, too. Now won't your uncle fill up on information that's been kept back from him since he left civilization six months ago? Rather."

He began to read eagerly, as a man long deprived of food seizes upon and devours voraciously the first edibles set before him.

He read steadily down the columns in order, without the casual, preliminary glance at the headlines which mark the man surfeited with news. At length he found an article which interested him greatly.

"Searching for Son," it was headed, and continued as follows:

A gentleman was in the city yesterday who has been in search of his son, who was stolen from him when but four years of age, for sixteen years. Mr. Griggs has hunted over nearly the entire continent in his search for the boy who was, but who is now, if alive, a young man.

He is possessed of considerable wealth, which he says he will spend during the remaining years of his life in this search. The boy was his only child and only relative, and he has nothing else to live for.

Mr. Griggs came to Seattle to remain until he is satisfied that the object of his search is not here. The task is one almost impossible of accomplishment, as the father has no clues, and the son is, of course, practically unrecognizable by this time. Mr. Griggs is at the Grand Hotel.

Sammy read the article carefully, reread it, took an old pipe from his dingy coat and put the paper in his pocket.

"Here's a thing that needs reflectin' on, an' I can reflect more perseveringly when the pipe's a-goin'," he said, as he lighted the tobacco. "M-m. I can sympathize with Mr. Griggs purty well, havin' gone without parents forever, 's fer's I know. P'raps I could help the old man find 'is long-lost son. P'raps I might have met his son some'res, havin' been there several times.

"Might be that I was intmatly 'quainted with his son down on a Texas ranch, er back in Montany herdin' sheep. Er maybe I knew 'im in a minin' camp er strugglin with logs and trees in the big timber most anywheres.

"The more I reflects the more it seems to me I did know a feller who was four years old once, an' who growed up to be a nice big man without a dollar. P'raps the description wouldn't be satisfyin' to the good old gent, but Arizona Charley's the man as could put in the long words an' other circumstantial evidence which has slipped clean away from me.

"Charley's got a long list of friends, an' he could supply a dozen long-lost sons to their pinin' fathers if there was a consideration. I guess I'll go over an' see Charley right now, an' he isn't the man that wouldn't divide with a friend that put 'im on to a good thing."

Sammy arose, and, picking up his bag, started along the water front, following the railroad tracks until he reached a building very much sagged as to roof and decidedly bulged as to sides.

Sammy hailed Arizona Charley, the proprietor, who had never seen Arizona, with much gusto, and a very confused salutation something like the following:

"Hello, pard, I'm durn glad to see you again; how's the fodder, hungry's a wolf; been to the Cape, an' broke; good piece of work on now, though."

After Sammy had somewhat satisfied his hunger and thirst, he began:

"Seems there's a kind-hearted father here lookin' for 'is son, the son havin' been absent without leave since he was four years old."

"Yep. So the papers say."

"What do you think about it? You didn't happen to run across a feller, did ye, some time ago, who might uv been this here son?"

"Can't say as I did," said Charley, carelessly.

"After thinkin' a minit or two you don't begin to recollect sich a circumstance, I reckon. If ye could only think it out, there might be some money in it, meanwhile thinkin' of some of yer friends, any one of which might uv been stole when they was four years old. Ol' man, I see yer memry's comin' back. Yer face begins to shine with the joyful light of recollection."

"Sammy," said Charley, setting down a glass on the wooden bar, "never since I run the White Pig saloon with a $2,000 bar in it have I had such recollections. I do remember a boy, just a kid—who was brought into the White Pig just sixteen years ago day before yesterday by a man who had stolen him from his father. You were squalling like a rat—"

"Good God!" he exclaimed, as the spot began to lighten.

"Me a-squallin'?" interjecter Sammy.

"Yes, you were squealing like a young rat, and why not, being only four years old and taken away from your home and father?"

Sammy sat with wide mouth, in stupefied silence.

"I took care of you, and I might say, brought you up, till you were fourteen years old, after which you set out for yourself. I haven't seen you since, until to-day, when you turn up just in time for me to restore you to your father.

"And I will do it, Sammy, though I have hesitated long and battled bravely with my own love for you before coming to the only just and right decision. It 'most breaks my heart, Sammy, to part with you. To have been a father to you so long, to have been separated from you all these years since you were fourteen and went away for yourself, and now to have you return just in time to allow your real parent to claim you, seems almost too much. I am nearly undone. Ah, me!"

Charley sat down in a chair and laughed till the water ran down his heavy cheeks. Sammy watched his friend for a time, and then he said:

"But I didn't mean for me to be restored. I never though of that."

"Which shows that you need a guardian and a father, Sammy. A man who could think out a beautiful scene of restoration and leave himself out of it, shows that he needs an administrator to his estate."

"Well," said Sammy, "I knowed you could fix it up good, but I didn't look fer nothin' like this. To be sure, an' now I'm tellin' the straight, I never did know who my parents wuz, an' never expected to. How soon do I go to see my pa?"

Arizona Charley said there would have to be a few details arranged, chief of which was the price the yearning father would pay, after which Sammy might bask in the sunshine of prosperity forever if he wanted to.

"I should think your father would be willing to come down handsomely with the cash," he added.

"From what little I know of the old gent's character I should expect 'im to be quite flip with 'is coin," responded Sammy.

Arizona Charley was obliged to wait in the lobby of the hotel that evening on account of another caller who was at that time occupying Mr. Griggs' attention. After a few minutes this gentleman appeared and passed out into the street.

"Smooth looking guy," thought Charley. "Shouldn't wonder if he had a lost son up his sleeve, too. Well, it can't be helped. May the best man win. I haven't much to lose."

He was shown up to Mr. Griggs' room and met a kindly old gentleman, who took him kindly by the hand and said he was glad to see him.

"He ought to be seeing that I am going to knit up his feelings with a flesh and blood son," thought Charley.

"What can I do for you?" asked Mr. Griggs.

"Wy—I—I've come to see about your son," said Charley.

For some time he had been thinking of the words he would use in making his errand known, and was surprised to find that the ones he had spoken were not at all the ones he intended.

But the subject being before the house now, he continued telling the story as he had thought it out. Mr. Griggs listened attentively and when Charley had finished, he said very gently:

"Really, I am greatly indebted to you for your self-sacrificing kindness in being willing to give up the young man whom you have known and loved so long, but the fact is, a gentleman who has just left me has promised to bring my son to me.

"The papers stated that I had no clues to work on, but that was a mistake, and it may be that the gentleman in question has not found the right man. In that case I will be only too glad to see the one whom you think to be my son. Come again at ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

Charley went out with a feeling which might have assailed him had he awakened some morning to find that Puget Sound had fled in the night, leaving Seattle paralyzed on her high terraces, and beaten in the race of cities for Pacific supremacy.

True, taking his cue from the papers, he had not attempted to furnish Mr. Griggs with any proofs that Sammy was the missing son; but the fact that proofs, of which he knew not the nature, would be necessary, was a blow to his hopes.

"I'm afraid your pa is even now embracing his true son and heir," he remarked to Sammy on his return. "A smooth guy has found one and it may be that you are still Sammy the Orphan. It's disgusting to see the way a fellow gets hindered when he tries to do a really good deed."

"I don't suppose I'd better order the buildin' materials fer the mansion on Queen Anne Hill," said Sammy, disconsolately. "Guess I'll have to go out to Ballard to-morrer an' see if they's a job loose in the mill."

The next morning Arizona Charley announced that he had dreamed it all out and that Sammy would soon be in possession of his own, provided, of course, that the other man had proved to be an impostor.

"You see, it's like this," he said. "I goes to the old gent and tells him that in the night his son arose and left me, being unaware that I had found his real father. Then I tells the old gent that of course I'm going to advertise for the missing man, but that it will be easier to identify him if I have one or two clues—especially in the way of a birthmark, for instance.

"He puts me on. Then I comes to you, and, being pretty good on the tattoo, I fixes you up, and after a few days you'll be discovered somewhere. Then I introduces you to your father. Then you're all right and so am I. See?"

Charley went up to the hotel feeling that he was a true diplomat, and walked confidently into Mr. Griggs' apartment.

Mr. Griggs met him with a smile and said:

"Well, sir, you may produce the man you believe to be my son. The other gentleman was—ah—mistaken." And he laughed pleasantly.

"Why, sir, the truth is he's gone," said Charley, concealing his delight behind a rueful face.

Then the conversation followed the lines intended by Charley, but when he suggested the necessity of clues, Mr. Griggs replied:

"You had charge of the boy until he was fourteen, did you not? Then you should know as much about him as I."

"Well, the truth is that I—well—"

"Wait a moment, please," said Mr. Griggs. "The truth is, I think, that you are nothing but an impostor—like hundreds of others who have attempted to defraud me. You will please remain here," he added, as Charley arose and walked toward the door.

Charley turned and found himself looking at a small revolver pointed very directly at him. He returned to his seat, saying:

"This is preposterous."

"So it is," replied Mr. Griggs, gently, "but it is the preposterous in life which gives it its spice and interest."

He rang, and in response a boy appeared at the door.

"Please send a policeman," he said.

In a few moments an officer appeared.

"Do you know this man?" asked Mr. Griggs.

"Whin was ut that I did not? He kapes a dhive down by the dhrink."

"Very well," said Mr. Griggs. Turning to Charley, he added, "Give this officer a description of the man you intended to palm off as my son."

Charley stammered and cleared his throat, but finally gave the desired information.

"You may go to this man's place," said Mr. Griggs to the policeman, "and bring me the person he has described. Tell him that it is all right and that his father is waiting for him. He will come."

The big policeman departed and in a short time returned with Sammy gleefully walking beside him.

"Now," said Mr. Griggs, pleasantly, "we'll see about this son of mine. Young man, please remove your coat and bare your shoulders. My son," he said, as Sammy began to take off his ragged garments, "will probably bear certain marks which it is extremely doubtful are carried by the majority of men. There should be on his shoulder—but—it is not necessary that you gentlemen should know all these details."

He looked at Charley, who, listening eagerly, shrank back with a look of disgust.

Sammy took off his old frayed coat. His vest joined the coat on the floor, and finally he stood with his arms and shoulders bare.

Mr. Griggs walked slowly around and surveyed his left shoulder.

"Nothing there," he said. Noting a look of disappointment on Charley's face, he added, smiling, "But, then, there shouldn't be."

He strolled slowly around Sammy and looked at his right shoulder.

"There seems to be—ah—considerable extraneous accumulation," he said, still smiling blandly. "Perhaps a little water judiciously applied might prove this man to be my son. Ha! ha!"

He left the room for a moment and returned with a sponge, which he applied vigorously to Sammy's shoulder.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, as the spot began to lighten. Suddenly he turned to Charley, with the words, "Plotter, imposter, deceiver! I forgive you your attempt at fraud. This man is my son."

Charley merely said: "W-well, ain't that what I said?"

THE IMPOSSIBLE MRS. JENNINGS

By ANNA M'CLURE SHOLL.

HORATIO JENNINGS, instructor in moral philosophy in our university, possessed all the qualifications for an imprudent marriage—boyish impulsiveness, a tender heart, total ignorance of feminine nature, and one thousand a year. We, who had three thousand, hoped that Jennings would not marry until he had made a name. Certain rare qualities of his mind promised glory to the university. He had captured our imaginations from the first. We saw the star above his brow.

During the college year, Jennings was in little danger of marring the fine simplicity of his scholarly life with the complex emotions attendant upon the experience of loving. He worked early and late. He literally gave himself to the university. He knew women only as students, or as the composite wife of the faculty. We realized that we need fear only his vacations. Even then the danger seemed very slight, for he went on long and solitary walking trips through the mountains, avoiding the expensive Summer hotels for obvious reasons.

The star above his brow was becoming visible even to the dullest eyes when, to our discomfiture, we heard that he was married. A day or two later the details reached us, suggestive of illimitable dreariness. While sojourning at a lonely farmhouse, Jennings had been seized with pneumonia in consequence of exposure on the mountains. The daughter of his host, realizing, no doubt, the possibilities of the situation, had nursed him faithfully, and had obtained her reward. In quixotic gratitude, Jennings married her, and brought her at once to his little suite of rooms in the barracks on the border of the campus.

"Have you seen her? Poor Jennings! She will end his career!"

The question and the exclamations became the stereotyped form of our despair over the impossible Mrs. Jennings. Those who met her spread ghastly reports of her unsuitability. Then Jennings brought her to the president's first reception, a very young, badly dressed, awkward country girl, with a pretty face and a manner half shy, half defiant. It was plain that she resented us as much as she worshiped her husband. Her adoration of Jennings touched our hearts, but could in no wise reconcile us to her.

At first the women of the faculty tried to find her a niche where she would be comfortable, and we should be justified in forgetting her, but it was impossible to do anything with her. After a time Jennings began to realize it himself. He woke up from whatever dream he had been in, and saw her as she was. Then he was more kind to her than ever.

One evening, an old friend of Jennings, a kind of father in our university Israel, was sitting on the stone bench at the back of the library, admiring the sunset, when he heard his name spoken with a kind of sob. Looking up, to his surprise, he saw Mrs. Jennings. She had been crying, and her mouth was working nervously.

"Why, my dear!" the old man said with gentle anxiety.

"Don't say nothin' to me; let me talk," she began impetuously. "I'm goin' to ask you a question, and if you don't answer me true and plain, I don't know what I'll do! There's no one else to ask, no one I can trust; you folks here never say things plain like other folks. But I want plain talk now!"

"Calm yourself," said the professor soothingly. "I'll try to help you. What is it you want to know?"

"I was in the library gettin' a book for Horatio he wanted in a hurry. I was in the what you call 'em—stacks. Two stuck up men were on the other side. They didn't see me. One said, 'Jennings dug his grave when he married. She'll stand in his way forever'; the other said, 'He's out of everything now. They can't ask that dreadful wife of his to dinners'—that's all. I want you to tell me if it's true; and I'll know in your face if you lie!"

The professor was not a coward, but he trembled like a leaf.

"Oh, my poor little girl!" he cried; then, with a visible effort, he added: "No, it is not true."

"You lie! I know it is!" she almost shrieked; then, before he could restrain her, she was crouching beside him, sobbing out her misery. She saw it all, she said. Would the professor forgive her using such language, but she was so unhappy! She didn't know how to make herself over, and she stood in Horatio's way!

He soothed her as best he could, and then gave her his arm, and led her home as if she had been a princess. He never saw her again. None of us saw her again, for that night the three little children of the chemistry professor, whose wife was in bed with a new baby, came down with diphtheria. They lived in the same barracks as Jennings, and Mrs. Jennings shut herself up at once with those children, and nursed them day and night till she pulled them through. Then she herself sickened, and before a week had passed she was dead.

A few days later, the wife of the chemistry professor met the father in Israel. She had just come from putting flowers upon Mrs. Jennings' grave, she said. She would love her memory forever.

"But I shall never quite understand her devotion at that time," she added. "I scarcely knew her. It seemed unaccountably reckless."

The father in Israel turned away his face.